

### REMARKS

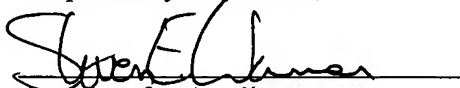
Applicants request favorable consideration and allowance of the subject application in view of the preceding amendments and the following remarks.

Claims 1, 3-6, and 15-18 are presented for consideration. Claims 1, 15 and 17 are independent. Claims 15 and 17 have been amended to clarify features of the subject invention. Support for these changes can be found in the application, as originally filed. Specifically, the Examiner's attention is directed to the discussion in the subject specification at paragraph [0036], which discusses that, as shown, a latent image is formed in each area of the near-field photomask 101 at which the light shield portion 106 and the second slit opening 104 cross each other. Thus, the Examiner will note that the area at which the light shield portion and the second slit opening cross each other is the area at which the latent image is formed. Independent claims 15 and 17, as presented, clarify this aspect of the present invention. Therefore, no new matter has been added.

Claims 1, 3-6 and 15-18 were previously allowed in this application. Applicants submit the amendments to claims 15 and 17 further define patentable features of the near-field photomask of the present invention. Accordingly, the instant application should be in condition for allowance. Favorable consideration and an early Notice of Allowance are requested.

Applicants' undersigned attorney may be reached in our Washington, D.C. office by telephone at (202) 530-1010. All correspondence should continue to be directed to our address given below.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven E. Warner", written over a horizontal line.

Attorney for Applicants

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